

# 11 Cosmonauts Die in Space

By ROBERT S. ALLEN  
and PAUL SCOTT



Mr. Allen

WASHINGTON — Space and missile accidents in Russia are causing far more deaths than those in the U.S.

On the basis of latest U.S. Intelligence data, the Soviet has lost at least 11 cosmonauts since its first space flight in 1960, which was unsuccessful. This has never been publicly admitted, although all the pertinent facts are known to U.S. authorities.

Significantly, five of the Russian cosmonauts were killed when their spacecrafts failed to go into orbit after reaching heights of several hundred miles.

No U.S. astronaut has been lost in flight. The only deaths have been in accidents on the ground and in plane crashes not connected with the space program.

The six other Soviet cosmonauts lost their lives in a series of mishaps ranging from missiles exploding during countdowns to training incidents involving helicopter crashes.

These and other details of the Russian fatalities are highlighted in a Central Intelligence Agency report prepared for the White House several weeks before the Cape Kennedy disaster that took the lives of astronauts Virgil Grissom, Edward White and Robert Chaffee.

The CIA study reveals that the U.S. has radio intercepts of the frantic efforts of Soviet ground controllers to contact their cosmonauts after their spacecraft failed to orbit.

These voice recordings, as well as records of the simultaneous tracking of the spacecrafts, have given the U.S. indisputable proof of the tightly guarded fatal Russian space accidents.

Several of the cosmonauts' deaths have further been confirmed by scientists in Iron Curtain countries, and a CIA source who is described as "our most accurate informer on the Soviet space program."

The CIA report also sheds light on a long-rumored Russian nuclear missile explosion that killed Marshall M. L. Nedelin, missile program chief, and more than 300 scientists and technicians.

This sensational disaster occurred in September 1960. Except for a one-paragraph announcement in the Soviet press that Nedelin had died "in line of duty," the Kremlin has never disclosed any details of his mysterious death.

Washington authorities believe

this costly accident may be one reason the Russians are now blaming the death of three U.S. astronauts on pressure to rush the space program.

Kremlin pressure on Soviet scientists to develop the first nuclear-powered missile is cited in the CIA report as one of the probable causes of the Russian tragedy.

As related by the CIA, many of the Soviet's leading scientists were working under Marshal Nedelin in a furious crash program to develop a nuclear missile before the 43rd anniversary of the October revolution. Khrushchev, then Premier, wanted to announce a successful launching during the celebration, and ordered that no effort be spared to achieve it.

When the missile was tested, it failed to leave the launching pad. After a period had elapsed, Nedelin and the scientists left the safety of the blockhouse to examine the missile. Suddenly, there was a titanic explosion, killing everyone in the vicinity.

The CIA report also tells of other cases where missiles being tested in Russia have gone off course and hit inhabited areas.

While it has been U.S. policy not to make official announcements regarding fatal Soviet space accidents, the Cape Kennedy tragedy may change this.

Under discussion by an inner Administration Intelligence committee is a proposal to provide the House and Senate Space Committees with publishable CIA findings of such Russian mishaps.

Also being deliberated is submitting to these committees during their inquiries of the Cape Kennedy tragedy a report on the 11 Soviet space deaths. One purpose would be to demonstrate that the U.S. space program is still by far the safest.

U.S. officials are watching to see whether delegates from Hanoi, Viet Cong and Peking, accept invitations to attend a privately sponsored "world peace conference" in Geneva in May.

The American Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, sponsoring the meeting, has notified the State Department that invitations have gone to the three communist groups. Also that North Vietnam and the Viet Cong have indicated "serious interest" in sending representatives.

There has been no reply from Peking.

## Inside Labor

